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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: NUR OTAN DISCUSSES PARTY ACTIVITIES
AND PLANS WITH THE AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Hoagland, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: During an October 29 meeting with the Ambassador, Nur Otan party First Deputy Chairman Darkhan Kaletayev explained that Nur Otan aims to become a party of "real deeds." The party sees itself as a conduit between the public and government, helping to solve socio-economic and other problems. Fighting corruption is also a Nur Otan focus. Kaletayev described the opposition parties as patriotic rivals, not enemies. He said that Nur Otan welcomes additional cooperation with USAID's political party training program, but would like concrete proposals from the U.S. side. He assured the Ambassador that Kazakhstan would implement its "principal" Madrid commitments. END SUMMARY.

"DOMINANT PARTY," WITH 850,000 MEMBERS

¶2. (SBU) During an October 29 meeting with the Ambassador, Nur Otan party First Deputy Chairman Darkhan Kaletayev described Nur Otan as the country's "dominant party," with an "absolute majority" in parliament. (COMMENT: "Absolute majority" is somewhat of an understatement, given that no other party holds a single parliamentary seat. President Narazbayev is the Chairman of Nur Otan, but Kaletayev essentially runs the party's day-to-day operations. END COMMENT.) Nur Otan has 800,000 members and 8,500 party cells throughout the country. Kaletayev explained that Nur Otan's aim is to become a party of "real deeds," not just words, and named further democratization, ensuring the country's prosperity, and overcoming the impact of the global financial crisis as top Nur Otan priorities.

CONDUIT BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT

¶3. (SBU) Kaletayev detailed Nur Otan's role as a conduit between the public and government. The party has "public reception" hours at its offices nationwide where citizens can register complaints about socio-economic and other problems. Nur Otan then presses the authorities to take action to resolve them. Citizens come to the party for assistance

because often local bureaucrats are inaccessible. Most of the complaints are about water, roads, health care, education, housing, and telecommunications. Nur Otan recently gathered detailed information about such problems in every settlement, and intends to turn the information over to the authorities at all levels of government. Some problems, Kaletayev explained, cannot be solved at the local level, but rather only by the national government. The party will set deadlines for solving problems, and if they are not resolved, will insist that explanations be given to the public. Nur Otan will use "party control" mechanisms to force government action.

14. (SBU) Kaletayev stressed the importance of Nur Otan's efforts to fight corruption. The party is implementing a program called "Ten Blows Against Corruption." On November 7, Nur Otan is hosting an anti-corruption forum at its national headquarters which Nazarbayev will participate in.

CHANNEL FOR THE OPPOSITION?

15. (SBU) Kaletayev argued that Nur Otan can serve as a channel between the opposition and government. He said he views opposition parties as political rivals, not as enemies. "There are a lot of smart people in the opposition -- half of them came from the government originally -- and they are patriots," he stressed. Nur Otan is willing to sit down with the opposition and use its access as the ruling party to pass the opposition's views to the government.

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PARLIAMENT OPEN TO OUTSIDE INPUT

16. (SBU) The Ambassador asked about Nur Otan's role in drafting legislation. Kaletayev explained that Nur Otan participates in legislative activities through its parliamentary faction, which adheres to tight party discipline. The party also has an institute of parliamentarianism which has experts who analyze legislation. Kaletayev described parliament as very open to input from civil society and all parties, pointing to the Public Council of the Majilis (the lower house of parliament) as a venue for dialogue.

SEEKING CONCRETE PROPOSALS ON USAID COOPERATION

17. (SBU) The Ambassador noted that Nur Otan is participating in USAID's political party training program, and asked Kaletayev about his impressions of the training. He responded that the United States has a long history of political party building and thus important experience to share with Kazakhstan. Nur Otan has good contacts with NDI and received a briefing from IRI on the results of its poll of political attitudes in Kazakhstan. Kaletayev said that there are many avenues for further cooperation with USAID's program -- including on local self-government and on legislation dealing with political parties, the media, and corruption -- but he would like concrete proposals from the U.S. side.

MADRID COMMITMENTS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

18. (SBU) The Ambassador stressed to Kaletayev the importance of Kazakhstan's implementation of its Madrid commitments on democratic reform. This is yet another opportunity for Nazarbayev to demonstrate his leadership as an international statesman, he explained. Kaletayev responded that the government's "Road to Europe" program provides a blueprint for implementation. Discussion is ongoing regarding the details of the necessary legislation. Kazakhstan will not meet international standards in all areas, but it will implement its "principal" commitments from Madrid, Kaletayev argued.

BIO NOTES

19. (U) Thirty-six year-old Darkhan Kaletayev was born in a village in East Kazakhstan oblast. He is a graduate of East Kazakhstan University and the National Higher School of Government Administration. Kaletayev has served in government positions for his entire professional career. During 1997-2002, he occupied various positions in the Ministry of Information. During 2002-08, he worked in senior posts in the Presidential Administration, his last year as Deputy Chief. He was appointed First Deputy Chairman of Nur Otan on October 13.

19. (C) COMMENT: While neither western-educated nor, as far as we could tell, English-speaking, Kaletayev (born 1972) nevertheless represents generational change at Nur Otan. His predecessor, Adlybek Dzhaksybekov (born 1953), did not seem to have his heart in a position he ultimately held for less than a year. In fact, Dzhaksybekov, a close Nazarbayev associate, appeared less interested in party work than in his outside pursuits, including producing a movie about the 2005 Kazakhstani presidential election campaign based on his perspective as then Chief of the Presidential Administration.

In appointing Kaletayev, Nazarbayev presumably believes he has found someone who will take party-building more seriously. Nur Otan, not surprisingly, continues to model itself along the lines of the Soviet-era Communist Party,

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with the division between Nur Otan and the government a tenuous one, made more so by the fact that opposition parties are not represented in government at any level, save for holding a handful of seats in local legislatures. Nur Otan's youth wing, Zhas Otan, organized celebrations on October 30 to mark the 90th anniversary of the Komsomol, the youth wing of the Soviet Communist Party. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND